

## The Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

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29 May, 2007

Councilmember Nick Licata  
Seattle City Council  
P.O. Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Councilmember Licata,

On behalf of the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH), we are writing to express our support for the Seattle Human Rights Commission's recommendation that the Seattle City Council act to add people who are homeless as a protected group under the City's Malicious Harassment ordinance.

Our coalition of service and housing providers, advocates, and activists works to ensure the safety and survival of people who are homeless, and to end the crisis of homelessness in our region. We work directly with youth, adults, and families who are homeless in Seattle and King County. In this work, we see the need for policies and laws which protect some of our most vulnerable neighbors. People who have no homes are far too often subjected to violent attacks because of their circumstances, targeted because of brutal ignorance and prejudice or because they are visible and present, as a result of being exposed and on the streets.

Few people who are homeless report crimes including harassment and assault because of fear, mental illness, or the belief that nothing will be done. SKCCH supports the Seattle Human Rights Commission's proposal because we hope that it will send a clear message that Seattle will not tolerate acts of violence and hatred towards our fellow Seattlites who experience homelessness.

**The Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH) works collaboratively to ensure the safety and survival of people who are homeless and to end the crisis of homelessness in our region.**

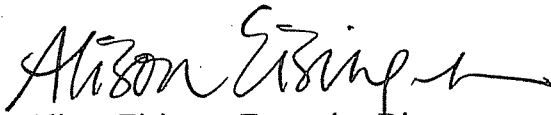
We recognize that such a change in the municipal code would be a largely symbolic gesture unless it were coupled with city-wide education and public awareness. It is our understanding that the Seattle Human Rights Commission intends for this proposal to be linked with education directed towards youth and young adults who appear to be disproportionately responsible for violent attacks on people who are homeless because of their homelessness.

We strongly encourage the City Council, the Mayor, the City Attorney, and the Seattle Police Department to see this as an opportunity to improve human rights and public safety through education and increased awareness about the real circumstances of people who are homeless. We recommend that people who are and have been homeless, as well as organizations which serve and work with them, be directly involved in planning educational materials and activities related to this ordinance.


Finally, we believe that public servants who are responsible for enforcing and applying city ordinances – police officers, public prosecutors, and others – bear special responsibility as protectors of human rights in terms of how they respond to reports of malicious harassment. We suggest that education and awareness efforts include these public servants in dialogue about how their accessibility, policies, and procedures, might be adjusted to improve the likelihood that people who are homeless can and will report crimes with the understanding that their rights are respected equally with the rights of other Seattle residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this important and complex issue.

Sincerely,



Alison Eisinger, Executive Director  
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness



Tamara Brown, Journey Home Program Manager, Solid Ground  
Co-Chair, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness



Sinan Demirel, Executive Director, ROOT Young Adult Shelter  
Co-Chair, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness